

**PRESS OPINIONS UPON H.R.H. PRINCESS  
CHRISTIAN'S LETTER ABOUT THE  
BRITISH NURSES' ASSOCIATION.**

THE Princess Christian, in her capacity as President of the British Nurses' Association, has published a letter, setting forth its aims and objects, and soliciting the support of the public to the scheme. The Association has been founded, to use the words of Her Royal Highness, in order to unite all British Nurses together for their own mutual help and protection, and for the advancement in every way of their professional work. At the present time the old dram-drinking Nurse, that was held up to the ridicule of the public, by Dickens in his exaggerated caricature of Sairy Gamp, no longer exists; but, although there are no less than 15,000 Trained Nurses in actual work, there are thousands of cases in which their aid cannot be claimed, and the patients have to accept the assistance of untrained, and therefore necessarily incompetent, Nurses. It is true, that at the present time no Surgeon or Physician will undertake the treatment of a serious case without he has the services of a Trained Nurse, on whose skilled experience and judgment he can implicitly rely to carry out his instructions, not merely as to the administration of the remedies at certain hours, but to attend to those hygienic arrangements as to air, temperature, food, cleanliness, quietude, surgical aids, &c., without which the most skilled medical or surgical advice is useless. The Physician can do no more than give the orders; it depends on the Nurse either to carry them into effect, or, if ignorant of her duties, to ignore them, and by so doing to frustrate the whole scheme of treatment. As the Princess Christian observes, there must be countless English homes "in which the presence of a Trained Nurse, knowing what to do and what to avoid, and capable of rendering intelligent obedience to medical direction, has turned the scale between life and death."

This necessary training can only be obtained by actual practice, under competent instructors, in large Hospitals. Merely following the routine practice of another Nurse is not sufficient; the Probationer must attend lectures, be well grounded in the hygienic foundations of her art, and then obtain her practice in the medical, surgical, and obstetric Wards of the Hospital before her education can be regarded as complete. During the period of her studentship she has to pass through much hard work, and even menial drudgery. Such knowledge as she requires cannot be acquired without cost of time, labour, and

money. The duties are often repulsive, and no woman who has not her heart in her work should contemplate entering a Nursing Sisterhood. There are, unfortunately, many who do so. There is a certain amount of romance about the externals of the calling that is not altogether unattractive to superficial observers. Consequently many women enter as Probationers who are unfit for the duties. These withdraw after a few weeks' trial, some giving up the pursuit altogether; whilst others, on the strength of a very brief residence in a Hospital, during which time they have not learnt even the rudiments of the occupation, dignify themselves with the title of specially-trained Hospital Nurses; they having possibly left the Hospital in anticipation of their dismissal as physically or mentally incompetent for the work which they have attempted to undertake.

The caution enforced by the Princess Christian is worthy of the most careful consideration. Her Royal Highness writes: "Against such unqualified persons it is in the power of Hospitals to protect themselves, but it is hardly in the power of the public to do the same. Many private agencies for the supply of Nurses to families have come into existence, and the number of such agencies seems likely to increase. Although there can be no doubt that many of those which now exist are admirably conducted and are of great public utility, there is, nevertheless, reason to fear that the managers of others do not always require sufficient security for the fitness of those whom they engage." As the institutions here spoken of are mere private speculations, the primary object of which is the pecuniary gain of the founder, it is obvious there can be only a mere personal guarantee of the fitness or acquirements of the Nurse recommended. In many cases these Nurses receive an annual salary from the proprietor, who, in others, shares the earnings. In either case the object of the founder is to supply the demand so that he may share the proceeds, and consequently a Nurse is sent, whether she is the one best qualified or otherwise. This evil would be avoided if the British Nurses' Association could obtain, as the Princess suggests, a Royal Charter of Incorporation, empowering it to enrol Nurses who can produce documentary and other satisfactory evidence, not only of their having passed through the curriculum of instruction, but also of being entitled to the confidence of their employers. At present no examination of Nurses is contemplated by the Association, but merely a registration of such as have gone through a proper training at a Hospital, and are of proved competency to discharge the duties they undertake. Should this scheme be carried into practical operation, persons will only have themselves to thank if they

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